



March 5, 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian:

New York State Assembly members Tom Abinanti, Amy Paulin, Chris Burdick, Steve Otis, Gary Pretlow, and Ken Zebrowski recently issued a joint press release regarding school districts returning to in-person learning for students within their respective districts. These Assembly members held a conference call on behalf of local school districts with the New York State Department of Health to address the six-foot distancing mandate in school buildings.

The New York State Department of Health was clear that *schools may now choose to distance students six feet apart or use a physical barrier where six foot distancing is not possible within a classroom.*

While we have been planning for a full-time, in-person reopening for months, we can now institute our plan to eliminate the hybrid model and return all students to **full time, in-person learning** using safety protocols that include a physical barrier at each desk. At least 25 districts in the region, including White Plains, Rye, and Harrison are planning for reopening in-person learning. We will maintain the existing full virtual classes through the end of the 2020-2021 school year as we transition away from hybrid learning to full time in-person learning for all students grades K-12. There is much work to be completed, and we have begun the process of preparing our buildings:

- We continue to work with the Westchester County Department of Health to ensure vaccinations are available for our teachers and staff.
- We have ordered polycarbonate barriers required to permit students to return to full-time, in-person learning in areas where students may be spaced at less than six feet apart in classrooms.
- Air purification units and MERV-13 filters are installed and operating in all our schools
- We replenish our cleaning supplies and review cleaning protocols to ensure compliance with CDC and Department of Health mandates. Our cleaning supplies are in good order to thoroughly sanitize our buildings with the full return of students through the end of the school year. We shall continue to clean common touch points throughout the day, including door knobs, bathroom fixtures, railings, and other commonly touched surfaces.
- In the next few days we shall be asking parents to commit to either *full-time in-person learning* **or** *full-time, remote learning* for the remainder of the school year.
- Principals will be sending follow up communications from each of their buildings to help explain and clarify building level protocols, while holding interactive remote forums for parents.

As we make this transition, we need our continued partnership with our families with the following:

**Daily Health Monitoring:** Be sure to review the health survey form at home daily to ensure your children are clear to attend school. High School students should complete the survey before coming to the building or when you arrive at the building each day. In addition, random COVID testing to monitor those on campuses will continue.

**Instructional Model:** While we are transitioning away from the hybrid learning model to a full time, in person learning model, we continue to offer the full-time, remote option to families through the end of this school year. Families are asked to commit to this model through the end of the school year in the learning model selection form you'll see next week. Depending on the number of individuals committing to *in-person instruction*, we may need to reassign some elementary children from the Remote Learning Academy (RLA) back to their original classroom teachers.

**Attendance:** Regular and daily attendance is expected in the instructional model a family selects and is vital for student success. A student is expected to remain in that instructional model unless quarantined due to a COVID-19 related reason. Connecting remotely to classes is only permitted for absences due to COVID-19.

**Masks:** Students and staff shall continue to wear masks while at school. During lunch time and when there are safe times to do so, mask breaks are taken at the direction of a staff member or teacher.

**Drop Off/Pick Up:** As we are anticipating a higher volume of cars on campuses during the mornings and afternoons, we are working with local law enforcement to help keep traffic moving. We expect that many families will choose to drive their children during at least the first days in-person learning. We ask for your patience as we work through this process.

**Positive Covid-19 Cases:** While the number of COVID-19 cases in our buildings has dropped due to the advent of vaccines and mitigation measures we have implemented, the virus is still active in our community. The requirements for quarantine remain and we must plan for dealing with additional cases that may occur. We will do everything possible to mitigate risk, but urge families to work together with us when positive cases are identified. We suggest that you plan for your family's quarantine requirements if needed.

**Students who have moved out of the district:** Only children who live in our school district can attend our schools, whether in-person or remote. If you have moved, then you will need to withdraw your children from our enrollment rosters.

**School Lunch:** In-person students will have lunch in school as usual. Breakfast will be available on a take-home basis for those families ordering it. Students enrolled in remote learning can continue to pick up meals as they have been.

## **Important Considerations**

- Fully reopened school will be different from what it was pre-COVID.
- In order to ensure social distancing, there will be less movement due to more individuals in each classroom.
- Lunch will be highly-organized, with students in their classroom cohort groups in classrooms and in larger spaces.
- Recess will be highly-organized, with students in their classroom cohorts in designated areas.
- Greater density and numbers of students in-person may lead to more students being quarantined.
- This can only work if the community helps. A low positivity rate within the community will enable us to stay open. We need to be more vigilant than ever!

## **Transition to in-person learning schedule as staff continue to get vaccinated**

**Tuesday, March 9 through Friday, March 12** parents complete a Learning Model Selection Form to select *in-person instruction* or *full remote instruction* for the remainder of 2020-21.

**Monday, March 29 through Monday, April 5** our support staff will install nearly 5000 poly-carbonate desk barriers in every school building and arrange furniture, in addition to thorough sanitizing and cleaning.

**Tuesday, April 6 and Wednesday, April 7** our schools will provide *asynchronous* work only posted by the teachers for those days on Google Classroom, so staff can complete final preparations for the full return of students.

## **Thursday, April 8, 2021**

- All schools and grades K-12 return to *full-time, in-person learning*
- Full-time remote learning continues through June 2021
- Hybrid learning model ends.

The district fully realizes that while this is welcome news for many of our families, others may have many concerns. Please reach out to your respective building principals to answer any questions and address any concerns for your child's experience at school.

Watch for the "Learning Model Selection Form" coming to you soon.

This is exciting news and we are thrilled to welcome your children back to school!

Sincerely,  
Edward A. Kliszus, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools